

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A hearing device adapted to be positioned in the ear canal of a wearer,
comprising:

electrical circuit means for receiving and processing incoming signals
representative of audio signals and converting them to an output for exciting the tympanic
membrane of the wearer;

a magnetically controlled latchable reed switch assembly for controlling at least
one of activation and deactivation of the hearing device or an operating parameter of the
hearing device; said reed switch assembly including:

a reed switch including first and second reeds providing electrical
contacts spaced apart by an air gap, respective lead wires electrically connected to said first and
second reeds and to said electrical circuit means, and

a latching magnet directly affixed to one of said first reed or the lead
wire associated with said first reed, said latching magnet having a magnetic field of sufficient
strength to maintain said first and second reeds together in electrical contact after said air gap
is closed by an externally applied magnetic field of suitable magnitude, polarity and proximity,
but of insufficient strength to bring said first and second reeds together in electrical contact
while said air gap exists.

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1 2. The hearing device of claim 1, wherein said latching magnet is directly
2 affixed to said first reed.

1 3. The hearing device of claim 1, wherein each of said lead wires is
2 ferromagnetic.

1 4. The hearing device of claim 3, wherein said latching magnet is directly
2 affixed to said ferromagnetic lead wire connected to said first reed.

1 5. The hearing device of claim 3, wherein said latching magnet is wedged
2 between said ferromagnetic lead wires.

1 6. The hearing device of claim 1, wherein said reed switch is encapsulated
2 in a hermetically sealed casing.

1 7. The hearing device of claim 1, wherein said reed switch assembly is
2 positioned for remote control by a control magnet wielded by the wearer.

1 8. The hearing device of claim 7, including a control magnet supplied with
2 said device and including means to prevent insertion of said control magnet into the ear canal.

1 ~~9.~~ The hearing device of claim 8, wherein said control magnet is an
2 electromagnet.

1 ~~10.~~ The hearing device of claim 1, wherein said reed switch assembly is a
2 power switch for activation and deactivation of said hearing device.

1 ~~11.~~ The hearing device of claim 10, wherein said reed switch assembly is
2 connected to additionally control an operating parameter of the device.

1 ~~12.~~ The hearing device of claim 11, wherein said reed switch assembly
2 comprises a plurality of reed switches.

1 ~~13.~~ The hearing device of claim 1, wherein said latching magnet has a
2 protective coating.

1 ~~14.~~ The hearing device of claim 1, wherein said reed switch assembly is
2 protectively potted.

1 ~~15.~~ A hearing device adapted to fit within or to be surgically implanted
2 adjacent to the ear canal of a human user and to be remotely controlled for powering the device
3 on and off and/or for adjusting an operating parameter of the device to enhance the hearing of

4 the user in response to a received incoming signal to the device representative of an audio
5 signal, said device comprising a magnetically controlled latchable reed switch assembly to
6 enable the user to remotely control the device by use of an external magnet; said reed switch
7 assembly including a reed switch having at least a pair of reeds spaced apart by an air gap, and
8 a latching magnet directly affixed to one of said reeds or to a lead wire associated therewith for
9 holding said reeds together in electrical contact after being closed by the user's passage of said
10 external magnet in proximity thereto, but of inadequate magnetic field strength to close said
11 air gap without aid; whereby once said reeds are closed, the latching magnet prevents
12 separation thereof until said reeds are exposed to an external magnetic field of sufficient
13 strength and opposite polarity to the field of said latching magnet.

1 16. The hearing device of claim 15, wherein said magnetically controlled
2 latchable reed switch assembly controls at least one of activation/ deactivation of the device and
3 device operating parameters including adjustment of frequency response of the device to said
4 received incoming signal representative of an audio signal and adjustment of loudness of the
5 processed received incoming signal as output vibrations of said hearing device to a vibratory
6 structure of the ear of the user.

1 17. The hearing device of claim 15, further including electrical circuit means
2 for processing the received incoming signal, and ferromagnetic lead wires connected to
3 respective ones of the reeds and to predetermined points of the electrical circuit means.

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1 18. The hearing device of claim 15, wherein said latching magnet is directly
2 affixed to one of said reeds.

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1 19. The hearing device of claim 15, wherein said latching magnet is directly
2 affixed to a lead wire associated with one of said reeds.

1 20. The hearing device of claim 16, wherein said reed switch assembly
2 includes at least one additional reed switch having at least a pair of reeds spaced apart by an
3 air gap, the first mentioned and additional reed switches being positioned for concurrent control
4 of activation of the device and adjustment of one of said operating parameters.

1 21. A method of remotely activating and deactivating a hearing device,
2 comprising the steps of:

3 implementing the hearing device with a magnetically controlled latchable reed
4 switch assembly to apply and remove battery power to the device including a reed switch
5 having at least a pair of reeds spaced apart by an air gap and a latching magnet directly affixed
6 to one of said reeds or to a lead wire associated therewith for holding said reeds together once
7 closed by an external magnetic field of appropriate magnitude and polarity but the latching
8 magnet itself having inadequate magnetic field strength for unaided closure of said reeds spaced
9 apart by said air gap, and

10 providing a control magnet means capable of generating a magnetic field of said
11 appropriate magnitude for use by the wearer by placement in close proximity to said reed
12 switch assembly (i) with one polarity when the hearing device is to be activated by closing said
13 reeds to apply battery power to the device, so that the latching magnet prevents said reeds from
14 being subsequently separated, and (ii) with the opposite polarity when the hearing device is to
15 be deactivated by overcoming the latching force of the latching magnet and opening said reeds
16 to remove battery power to the device.

1 22. The method of claim 21, including the step of
2 fashioning the control magnet means to fit near the opening of the ear for
3 convenience of use by the wearer when the control magnet means is to be placed in close
4 proximity to said reed switch assembly, but with a stopper to prevent the control magnet means
5 from entering the ear canal.

1 23. The method of claim 21, including the step of
2 fabricating the control magnet means in the form of a bar magnet having
3 opposite polarities at its ends so that the control magnet means is conveniently inverted and
4 placed near the ear by the wearer for powering the device on and off.

1 24. The method of claim 21, including the step of
2 implementing said magnetically controlled latchable reed switch assembly with

an additional pair of reeds spaced apart by an air gap, to enable remote control of the loudness of the output of the hearing device by use of said control magnet means by the wearer.

25. The method of claim 21, including the step of implementing said magnetically controlled latchable reed switch assembly with an additional pair of reeds spaced apart by an air gap, to enable remote control of the frequency response of the hearing device to received incoming signals representative of audio signals by use of said control magnet means by the wearer.

26. A remotely controllable reed switch assembly for a hearing device, comprising:

a reed switch including first and second reeds providing electrical contacts spaced apart by an air gap, and respective lead wires electrically connected to said first and second reeds and to said electrical circuit means, and

a latching magnet directly affixed to one of said reeds or to the lead wire associated therewith, said latching magnet having a magnetic field of sufficient strength to maintain said first and second reeds together in electrical contact after said air gap is closed by an externally applied magnetic field of suitable magnitude, polarity and proximity, but of insufficient strength to bring said first and second reeds together in electrical contact while said air gap exists.

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1 27. The remotely controllable reed switch assembly of claim 26, wherein said
2 latching magnet is directly affixed to one of said reeds.

1 28. The remotely controllable reed switch assembly of claim 26, wherein
2 each of said lead wires is ferromagnetic.

1 29. The remotely controllable reed switch assembly of claim 26, wherein said
2 latching magnet is directly affixed to one of said lead wires.

1 30. The remotely controllable reed switch assembly of claim 26, wherein said
2 latching magnet is wedged between said lead wires.

1 31. The remotely controllable reed switch assembly of claim 26, wherein said
2 reed switch is encapsulated in a hermetically sealed casing.

1 32. The remotely controllable reed switch assembly of claim 26, wherein said
2 reed switch assembly is arranged for remote control by use of a control magnet to be placed
3 in sufficiently close proximity to said reed switch assembly to cause closure or opening of the
4 reeds thereof.